

Sail Away Cocktail Napkins

By: Heidi Proffetty

Skill Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Makes: 4 Cocktail Napkins

Finished size of each: Approx. 5 ½" X 5 ½"

The 4th of July is probably one of the most popular holidays to gather with friends and family for an outdoor party. Undeniably, the best part of any 4th of July party is the food and beverages. BBQ burgers, sausages, ribs, pasta & potato salad, grilled veggies, corn on the cob, watermelon, blueberry or apple pie topped with ice cream, ice-cold lemonade, ice tea and other refreshing cocktails. Equally as important to all this mouthwatering food and drinks are the decorations. And the easiest item to dress up for the fourth, is the outdoor dining



table. Using festive linens, tableware and a patriotic centerpiece all work very well. Red, white and blue table runners, tablecloths and placemats add the perfect pop to color to any table. Another simple table accent to use are fabric napkins. They add an element of softness as well as design to any table surface. Dinner napkins can be folded & propped up on plates as mini centerpieces or layered between dishes for a chic look, while cocktail napkins, usually with pretty little themed designs can be scattered around entertaining surfaces for a stylish touch. In this tutorial, I am sharing how you can make a set of classic mitered cornered cocktail napkins, embellished with hemstitching and decorative stitch art.

PROJECT SUPPLIES

½ - Yard of Navy Blue and Red colored medium weight linen

A small package of light weight water soluble stabilizer

1 – of each color Navy Blue, Red and White 30 weight spool of cotton thread or 40 weight polyester thread

1 – Iron off fabric marker in white (preferred) or fabric chalk pencil in white
Spray starch

Scissors: Sharp tip embroidery, duck bill and regular fabric cutting scissors

Cutting mat, rotary Cutter & standard quilt ruler

A small quilt ruler that has 45-degree markings

Iron & ironing surface

Pressing cloth

Straight pins

Hemstitch or Wing Needle – Schmetz brand size 100/16

Standard Sewing or Embroidery Needle - Size 80/12 or 90/14

Standard Straight Foot & Open Satin Stitch Foot

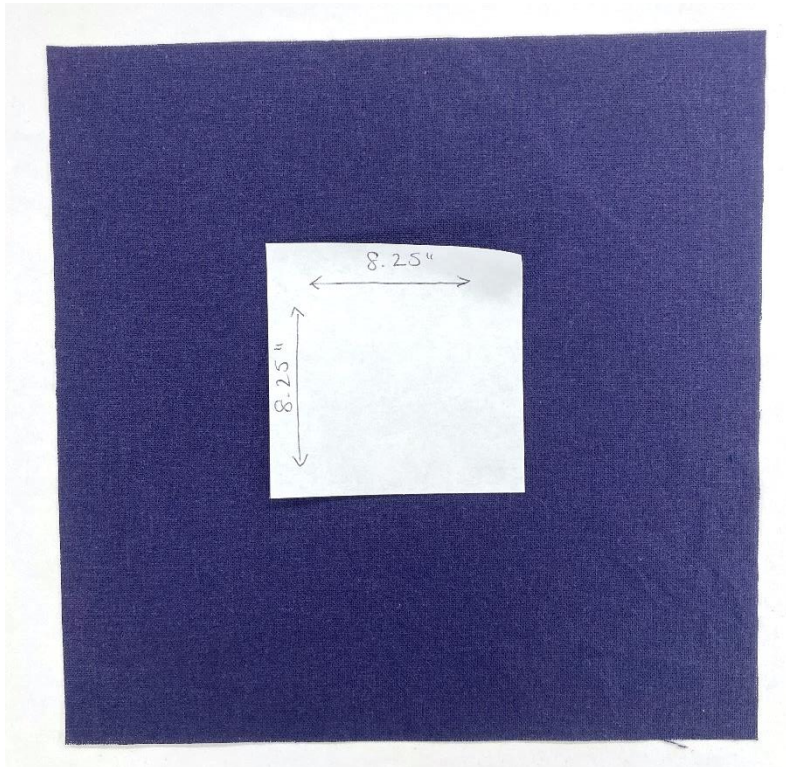


PART 1 – FABRIC CUTTING

For more precise cutting results, prior to starting, prepare all fabrics with starch & press.

Use your rotary cutter, cutting mat and quilt ruler.

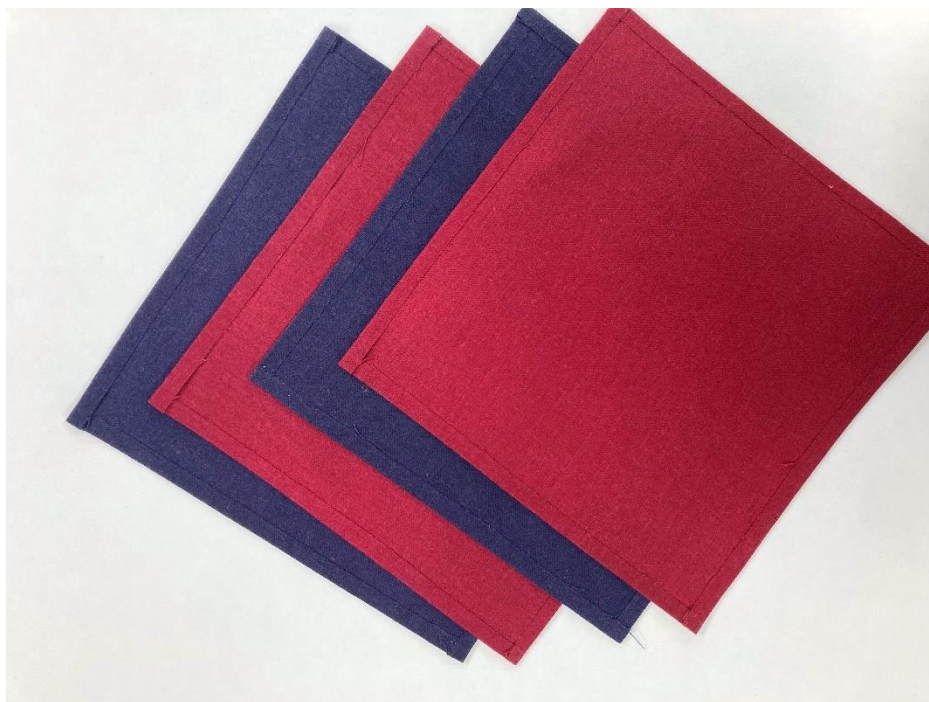
1. Cut 2 - 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " squares from both Navy Blue and Red linen



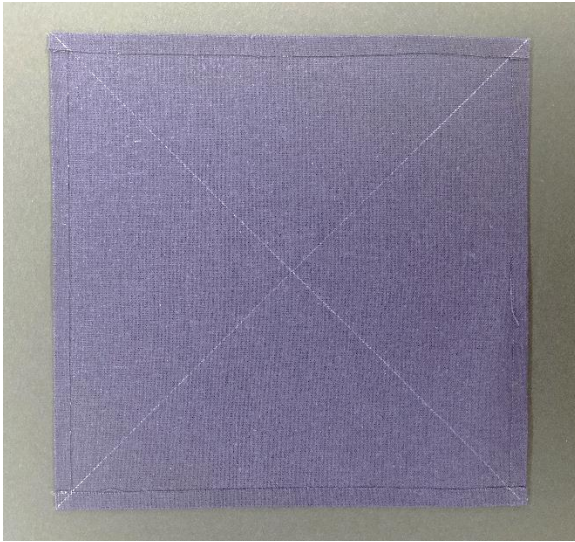
2. Cut 4 - 5" squares of water-soluble stabilizer
3. Cut 4 - 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " squares of water-soluble stabilizer

PART 2 – Preparing the Napkin Edges & Marking Hemstitch Guidelines

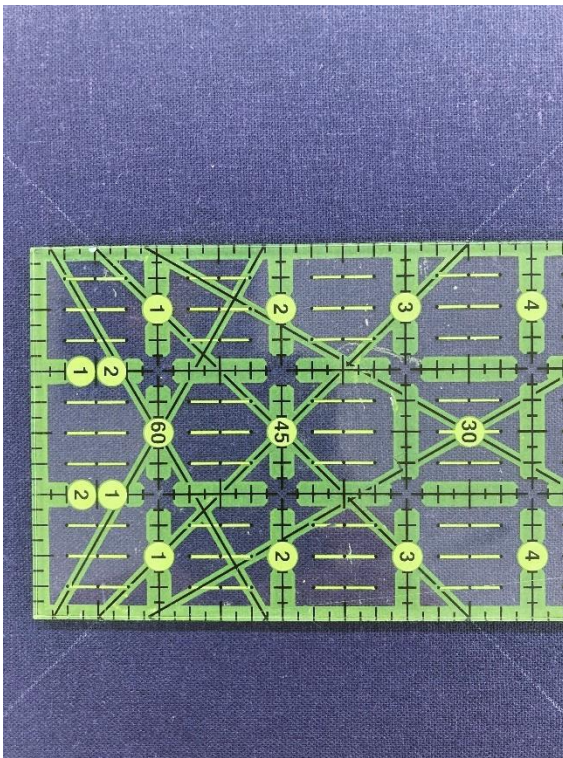
1. Fold & press $\frac{1}{4}$ " in on all 4 sides of napkin.

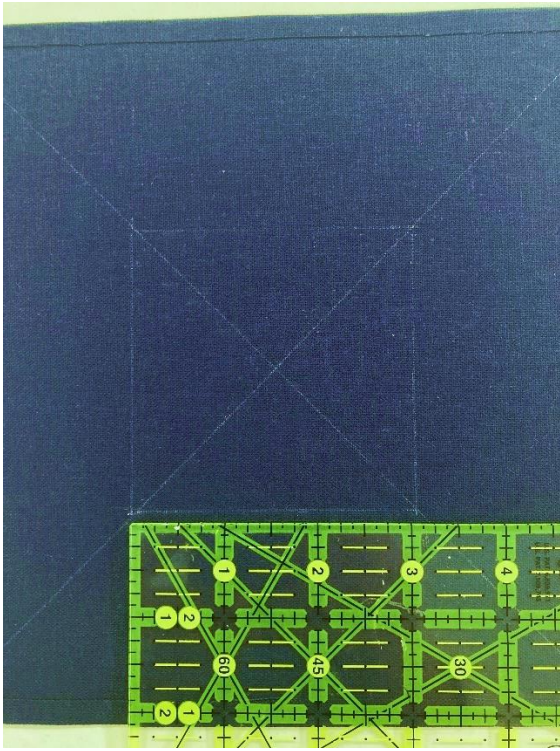


2. On the side of the napkin with $\frac{1}{4}$ " folds, use a fabric marker to mark the diagonal lines from corner to corner.

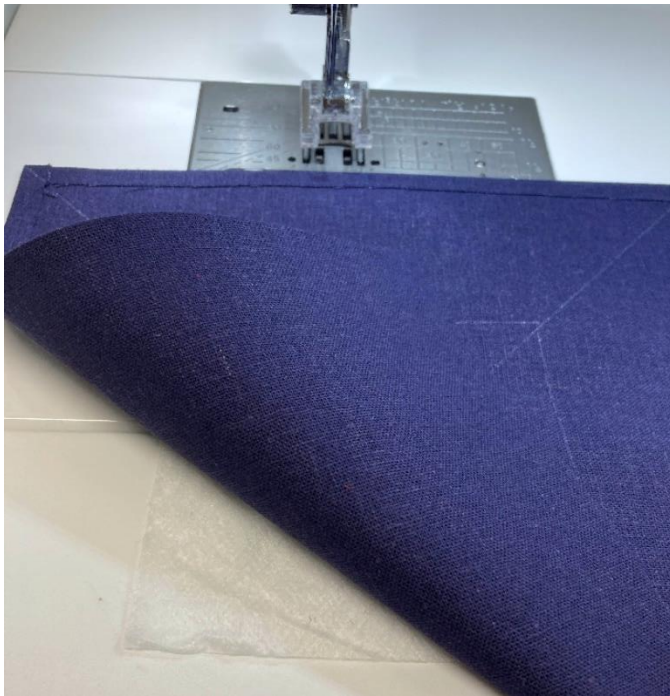


3. Using a quilt ruler with 45-degree indications, align the center of the 45 degree markings on the ruler with the center of the drawn diagonal lines and mark out a 3" square in the center of the napkin as shown.



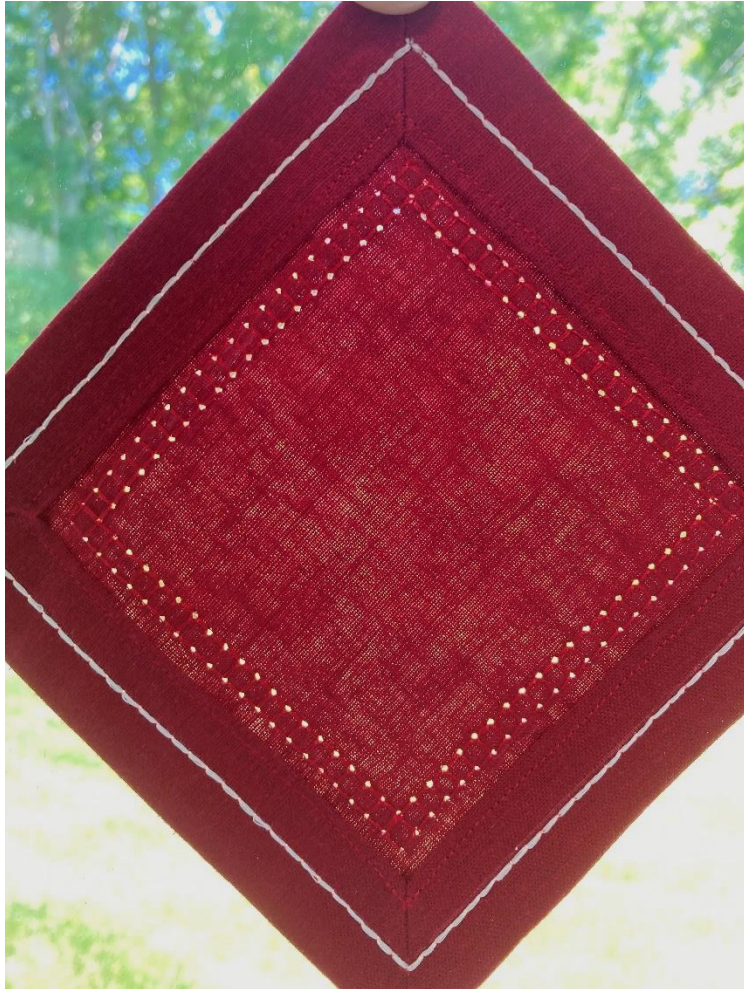


4. Working with the marked side face up, place a piece of 5" water soluble stabilizer on the underside of the napkin, carefully centering it to cover the 3" marked square. The stabilizer is used to support the hemstitching in the next step.



Hemstitching

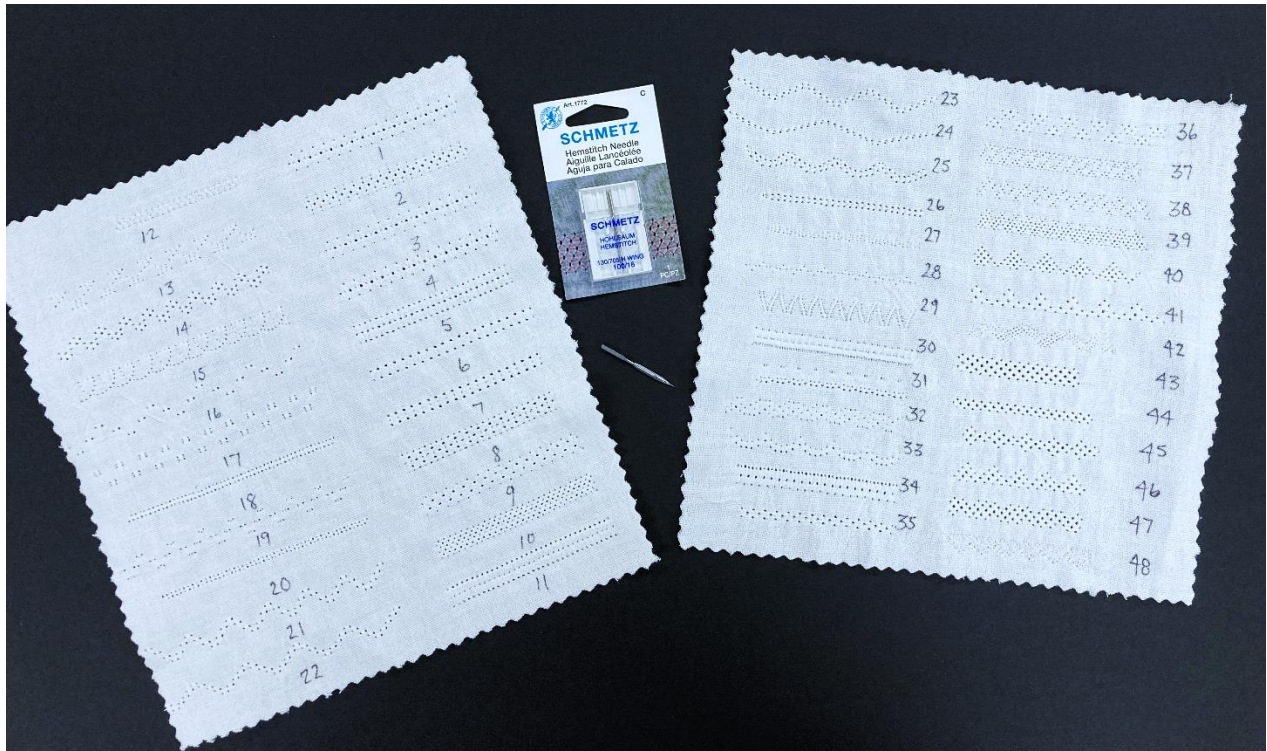
Hemstitching is a beautiful finishing technique. It can be done by hand sewing or by sewing machine. It's a type of decorative stitching or heirloom stitching and it is often seen on clothing, table linens and bedding. The original use of this stitch is as the name implies to stitch hems but a more couture use of this type of stitching technique was used for delicate and detailed stitch embellishments. Hemstitching works best on natural, light to medium weight, loosely woven fabrics such as linen, cotton batiste or voile. What gives appeal to this type of stitching is to see the perforations and not so much the stitching. To accomplish this the thread should be both light weight thread and should match the color of the fabric used.



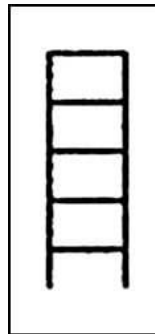
You need a special sewing machine needle, called a Hemstitch or Wing Needle. The needle has a wing or flange on both sides of it. The wide wings of the needle spread the fibers of the fabric apart and depending on the stitch selection, the needle backtracks multiple times through some of the same holes creating small holes in the fabric with ornate stitch patterns. There are single and double wing needles available and they come in various sizes. Here in my stitched samples, I have used a SCHMETZ single needle, size 100/16.



And speaking of stitches, check out what your sewing machine has to offer for heirloom stitch selections. Many of today's sewing machines offer a variety of decorative heirloom stitches to choose from. My Janome M7 has 48 heirloom stitches to choose from. It's important to make yourself some stitch samples. You really cannot tell by looking at your sewing machine manual, LCD screen or stitch chart just how beautiful the stitch is or what stitch might work best for your project until you stitch it out.

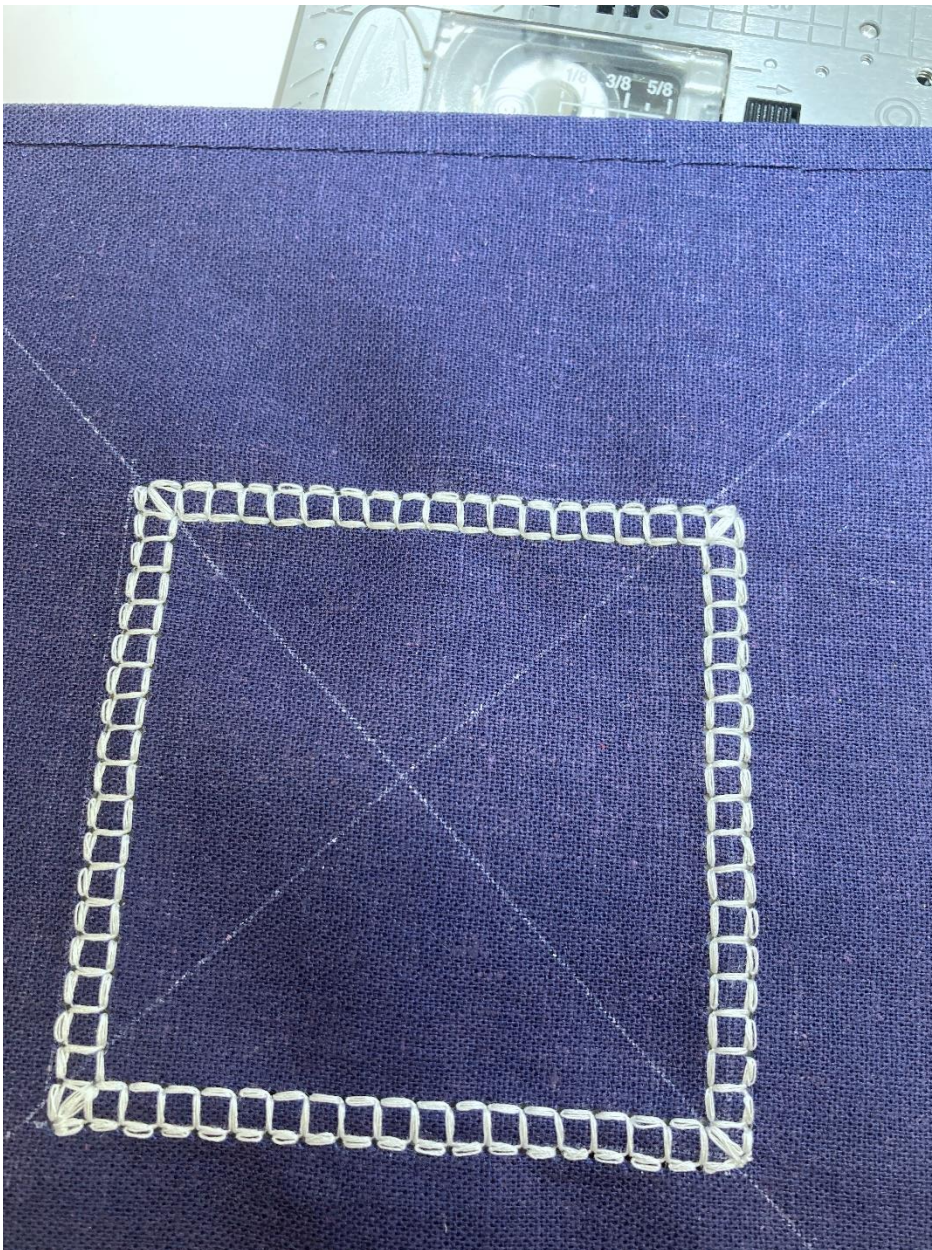


The type of hemstitch I choose to use for this project is a common stitch, called the ladder stitch. The stitch looks similar to this image below. To find out if your sewing machine has this stitch check the stitch chart found in your sewing machine manual or on the flip chart or printed stitch charts located physically on your sewing machine. For computerized sewing machine models, refer to stitch charts located on the LCD screen of your sewing machine. The ladder stitch, is also used to sew on top of a narrow satin ribbon as another type of decorative embellishing technique.



PART 3 – Making the Hemstitch

1. Attach your satin stitch foot, choose either the closed toe or open presser foot version. Insert a wing tip needle into your sewing machine, thread your sewing machine and bobbin with white thread. As mentioned above, depending of the effect you are trying to achieve, you can use a lightweight similar colored thread to match your fabric or a contrasting heavier weight contrasting colored thread as pictured here to emphasize the stitching on the napkin.

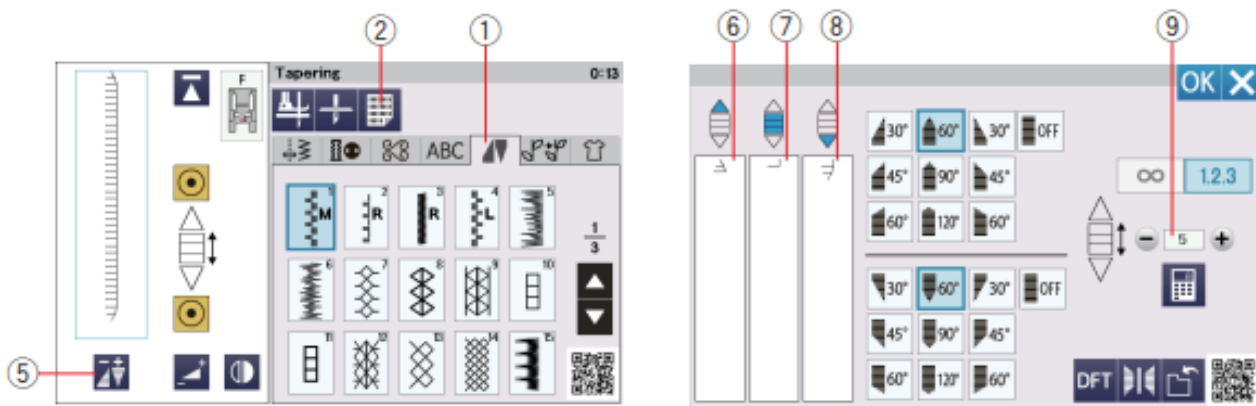


Here's a few tips sewing with the ladder stitch.

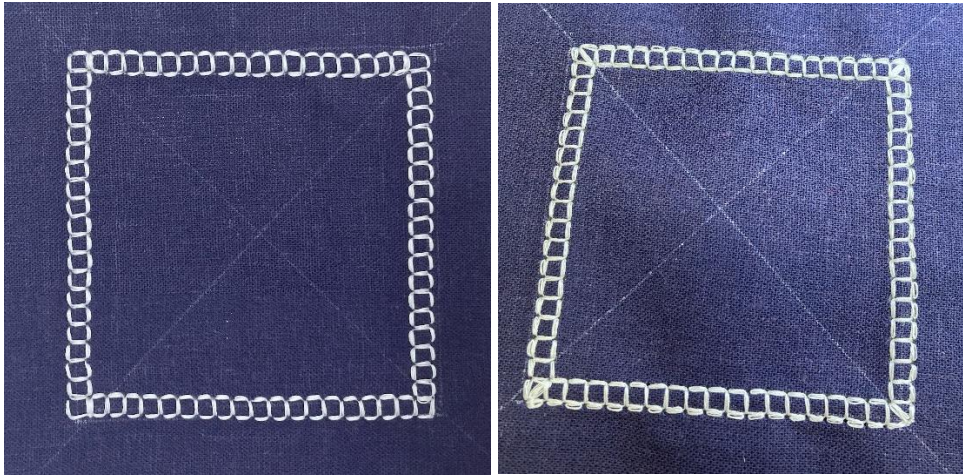
Tip 1 - When you first start to stitch, if you don't have a sewing machine that automatically locks the stitches at the start of a decorative stitch, then you'll want to take a few small locking stitches to prevent the stitches from unraveling. Most of Janome's computerized sewing machines, including the Janome M7 Continental will perform a lock stitch at the start of a decorative stitch pattern.

Tip 2 - Anytime your sewing dense or decorative stitches, where the needle swings right to left and back and forth, you'll want to slow your sewing machine speed down. This will give the machine ample time to form those pretty stitches.

Tip 3 - There are several methods to achieve turn a corner when using decorative stitches, but each requires practice to achieve nice looking results. As with all projects, practice is the key to success so using a piece of similarly prepared fabric, use a quilt ruler and fabric marking pen/pencil and draw the exact sewing guidelines on your practice piece of fabric as you would for your project. Test stitch your selected stitch to determine its width and length. In my sample, it takes 20 ladder stitches to equal the length of one side of my square. Keep watch on how the pattern stitches out and note the exact starting and stopping points. Stitch along your guidelines, slow down the speed of your sewing machine when approaching corners. Each side of your square will be stitched with its own seam. Meaning you will need to lock the stitch at the beginning and end of the seam. You will need to pivot your fabric and manually align the stitching to the previous row of stitching for each side of the drawn square. It is also helpful to activate pivot and needle down in fabric features if your machine supports these functions. Another method, again depending on your machine model, is to use tapered stitch function. With the Janome M7 Continental as well as several of Janome's professional sewing machine models, using the tapered stitch function you can set the number of stitches and adjust the angle of the taper, 30, 45, 60, 90 and 120 degrees which allows you to turn corners using decorative stitching producing professional looking results.



Here are stitched examples of both corner turning methods:



2. Using a pair of duck billed scissors, carefully remove the majority of the water soluble stabilizer from the backside of the fabric being careful not to cut into the stitching. The remainder of the stabilizer will be removed when the napkin is washed.



PART 4 – Making Mitered Corners

In general, there are many similar methods for making mitered corners available on YouTube and I would suggest watching a few of these videos to get a good visual understanding of this technique in addition to my steps below.

1. First, fold inward and finger crease all 4 sides of the napkin approximately 1". Using a fabric marking pen/pencil, mark a 45 degree diagonal line in each of the 4 corners. Use the 45 degree marking on your quilt ruler and the intersection of your finger crease to guide you with alignment and to mark straight lines.



2. Putting right sides together, fold the napkin on a diagonal, matching up the edges and using the marking you just drew as guides. Use a pin to hold the edges even. Using a straight stitch set at 1.80 stitch length, sew on the marked line, back tacking a beginning and end. Do this for all 4 sides of the napkin.



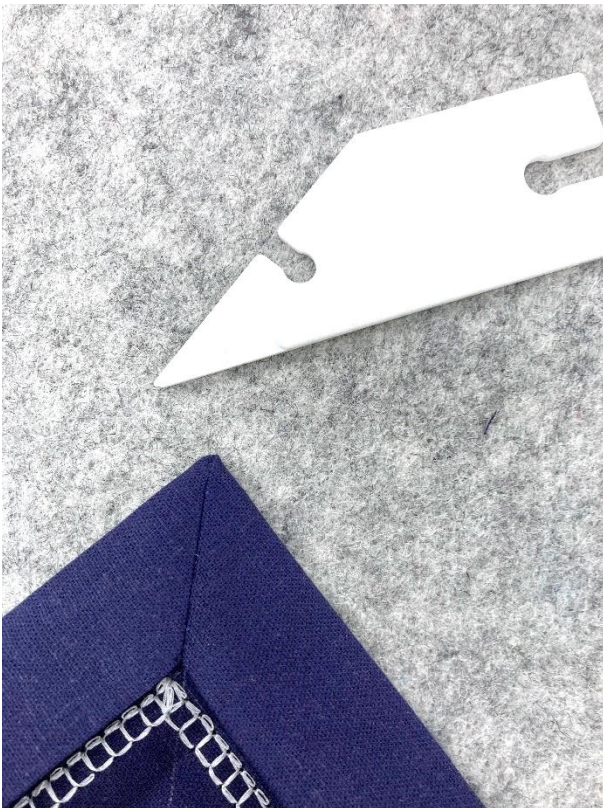
3. Next clip from the folded edge 45 degrees away from the stitched line out to $\frac{1}{4}$ " rotate the napkin and continue to cut $\frac{1}{4}$ " along the stitched line.



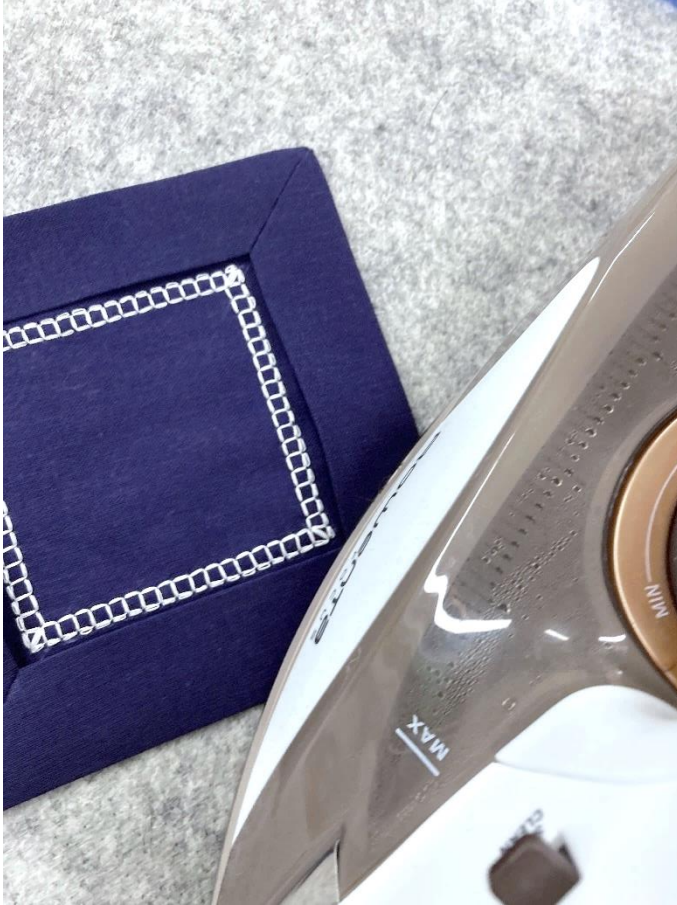
3. Finger press open each of the $\frac{1}{4}$ " seams just sewn, press the seams flat using iron. Press from the outer edge of the opened seam inward.



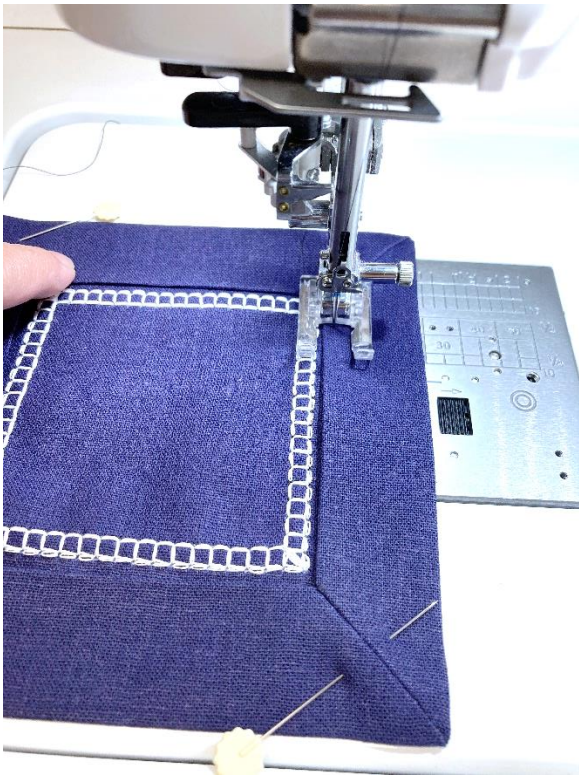
4. Using your fingers to hold the seam flat, turn each corner, right side out. Next, using a corner turning tool, gently poke out each of the 4 corners for nice looking sharp pointed corners.



5. Start in a corner, press the mitered corner flat using the side or edge of the iron, pressing inward. Continue by pressing each of the 4 edges evenly and flat. Finish using a pressing cloth to press the entire napkin flat.

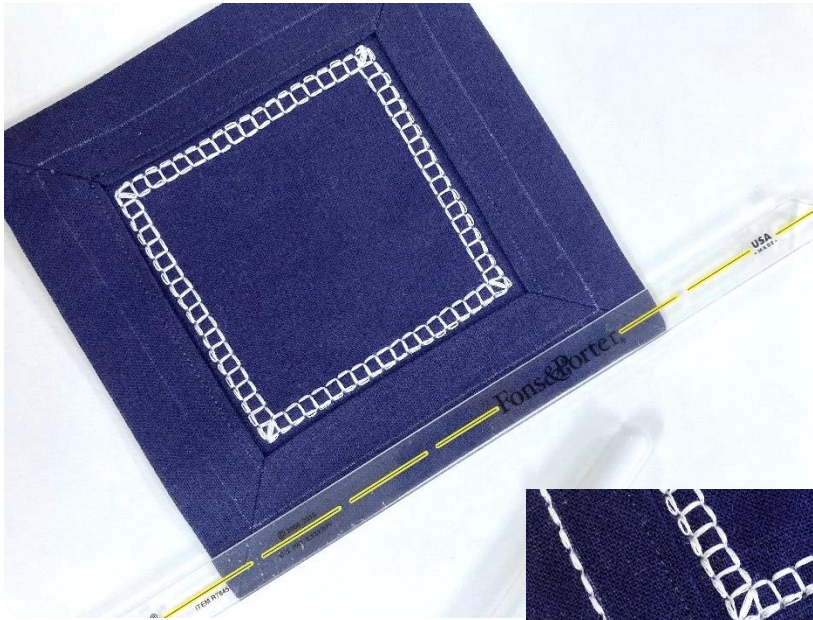


6. To secure the folded edge, use a straight stitch set at 1.80 stitch length. Edge stitch all 4 sides back tack at beginning and end. When turning a corner, stop stitching exactly in the mitered seam, with needle down, lift presser foot (or activate pivot feature) pivot the napkin and continue edge stitching.



PART 5 – Embellishing with Decorative Stitch Art

1. To create the decorative stitching for the napkin's border, on the front side of the napkin, use a fabric pen/pencil, mark $\frac{1}{2}$ " guidelines around all 4 sides. Select a decorative triple straight or stretch stitch and change the stitch length to 5 mm. Stitch following the guidelines around all 4 sides. If desired, bring your thread tails up and later pull them to the back and tie in a knot to secure.



2. To create the sailboat design. First, we need to talk about how to use ordinary sewing machine stitches to make decorative stitch art designs.

As you read through this, take a closer look at your sewing machine stitches. Think about how to use the stitches to build a design.

Here, I am using the Janome M7 Continental and my design is built using 5 different stitch selections. I used the right triangle satin stitch #17, which has been elongated 3 times it's length. Many sewing machines allow you to automatically make adjustments to elongate satin stitches. For the left sail, I chose different decorative stitches found in the tapering

section of the Janome M7. Tapering stitches are effective designing options to use because you can alter the beginning and end angles of the stitch as well as set the number of middle stitches to be stitched out. For a sail to actually resemble a sail, I first picked a decorative tapering stitch, then I set a 30 degree left angle for the top, set 1 decorative middle stitch, and finished with a 60 degree left angle for the bottom. Using this combination, when stitched out, effectively created a pretty little left sail. Next, I used a triple straight stitch to create the pole and a straight satin stitch with varying tapered ends was used to make the boat's hull. I then stitched 1 dot, decorative stitch #6, to finish the top of the sailboat's pole.



Now, I understand that not every sewing machine comes with elongation or tapering stitch capabilities. If your sewing machine does not support these features but does have the ability to program stitches, you'll just have a little more manual work to make your sailboat design. For example, you might need to program each stitch set at incremental widths or manually adjust the stitch width setting at the beginning and ends of your stitches to achieve tapered or narrowing stitch results. Stitch art designs work well when you have 9 mm stitches to work with because you have more options to adjust the width but you can still make designs using a 7 mm sewing machine but again you have to get a little more creative. For example, stack two 7 mm stitches together to build a larger shape.

Here are a few important stitch art tips:

Tip 1 – Use stabilizer. Decorative stitches can be light, medium or heavy in stitch density so to minimize puckering to get nice stitch results use an appropriate type of stabilizer based on your project.

Tip 2 - Don't forget to lock the stitches at the beginning and end to prevent the stitches from unraveling.

Tip 3 - Practice your stitch art designs on sample pieces of fabric and make notes of your stitch selections, number of stitches used as well as any stitch setting adjustments you made that differ from the default settings.

Tip 4 - Make note of the overall size of the design, the length and width of your finished design in order to use in appropriately in any of your sewing projects.

To center the sailboat design on the napkin. I folded the napkin in half twice, finger creasing each time to locate the center of the napkin. I know from my practice stitching that my overall design is 40 mm tall by 22 mm wide or approximately 1 ½" tall by just under 1" wide.



Again, I use my fabric pen/pencil to mark stitching guidelines as well as my open toe satin foot for maximum visibility as I stitched each part of this design.



Using your ordinary sewing machine stitches to create your own custom stitch art designs is a fabulous way to use your sewing machine to embellish any sewing project. Here, I created this larger sailboat design and mini anchors to accent the border to make another custom cocktail napkin design.







Happy Sewing & Enjoy your 4th of July Celebrations!

Heidi